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**Testimony
Committee on Human Services
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**SENATE BILL 103: AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF
PODIATRY SERVICES UNDER THE MEDICAID PROGRAM.**

Senator Musto, Representative Terycak and members of the Committee, I would like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB103: AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF PODIATRY SERVICES UNDER THE MEDICAID PROGRAM.

My name is Bruce Gould. I'm an internist and primary care physician and serve as the medical director at the St. Francis/University of Connecticut Primary Care Center at the Burgdorf Health Center in the north end of Hartford. This community health facility serves the needs of some of the most vulnerable and underserved populations in the state. I am also the Associate Dean for Primary Care, the Director of the Connecticut Area Health Education Center Program at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine and medical director of the Hartford Department of Health and Human Services.

For the past 23 years I have practiced general internal medicine at the Burgdorf Health Center serving mainly a Medicaid and uninsured population. As an internist, many of my patients are elderly and the majority have Diabetes. Most people, if asked what Diabetes is...say "high sugar." What most don't get to see are the ravages of the disease over time. My job as a physician is to help my patients manage their disease through diet, weight loss, exercise and lifestyle change and to prescribe for them appropriate medications that will stave off the heart disease, peripheral vascular blockages, kidney problems, blindness and other complications associated with Diabetes. I work closely with nurses, pharmacists, dietitians, other medical specialists...all part of a team focused on keeping that patient as healthy as possible for as long as possible. With time, many if not most diabetics develop blockages in their arteries leading to potentially devastating consequences.

Podiatry is an integral part of the Diabetes care team. With early recognition of patients at risk and timely referral to Podiatry and intervention with appropriate treatment, orthotics, shoes, etc., most ulcers can be prevented and those that do present, if caught early, quickly healed. I work closely with podiatrists in my practice and can confidently state that we have saved limbs. Frankly, I never did understand why Podiatry was excluded from Medicaid and do not believe that the state has saved any money by doing so. It is infinitely cheaper to prevent a Diabetic ulcer than to do catch up after the fact, once an ulcer has developed.

Health care reform has been the topic of endless debate over the past few years. As we consider the changes that must occur in order to create a more functional health care system, most authorities recommend transition to a more coordinated health care system based on the patient centered medical home. The concept is built around a team that will care for populations of patients focused on optimizing outcome and quality of life. I believe that the Podiatrist needs to be part of that team especially for our elderly and poor with their high risk of diabetes. It will save many of our elders from limb loss, an occurrence that often results in hospitalization, and potentially the need for placement in skilled nursing facilities. I urge you to restore Podiatry services to all Medicaid patients by approving SB 103. It is the right decision medically. It is the right decision economically. And it is just the right thing to do for our patients. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

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